



KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL  
MAYOR

CITY OF SALEM  
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CEMETERY COMMISSION

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BETH GERARD, CHAIR

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PATRICIA DONAHUE  
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**MINUTES OF THE CEMETERY COMMISSION**  
**August 25, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Cemetery Commission was held on August 25, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system. Present on call were: Chair Beth Gerard, Members: Patricia Donahue, Anthony O'Donnell and Jen Ratliff; Cemetery Superintendent Robert LeBlanc and Commission Clerk Joanne Roomey.

**1. Approve Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes for July 21, 2021**

Ms. Ratliff made a motion to approve the Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes for July 21, 2021. Seconded by Ms. Donahue. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

**2. Cemetery Work Report**

- Interment Activities within the cemetery for the past month are:

(14) Cremation burials  
(3) Full burials

- The new water fountains have been installed in the two ponds at Greenlawn and are scheduled through the daylight hours and have been performing well. The fountains provide some aeration for the ponds to help the pond life and reduce the algae.
- In the back section of the cemetery a large pine tree was removed over the past (30) days. This tree began to turn brown and went into a complete collapse of the canopy in a couple of months. Right now, the mature tree looks to have been suffering from a drought stress and the tree would only continue to get worse and the decision was made to take the tree down.
- In the month of July, the Cemetery staff was increased by two employees. One was a full-time mechanic, who came from the central motor pool and will be a great help with equipment repairs inhouse. The other was a local High School student who did a very good job with string

trimming and some of the other daily tasks. He has since left and hopefully will look to come back again and join the crew next summer.

- The latest mandate from the CDC and local Health Department is requiring the use of masks indoors throughout Salem. The Cemetery office is now a mandatory mask zone, as well as the maintenance garage. Additional PPE was issued to the staff, and they are aware of the new directives for COVID protection. Luckily, the work in the outdoors does not require a mask to be worn, and the crew can work without masks, but have been instructed to keep the 6' distance during interactions with the public.
- Loam and seeding have begun on the edges of the new pavement in the Harris Circle and Burke Lot sections. The reason for the delay on the loam was to avoid the infiltration of crabgrass seeds that are prevalent during the hot summer months. Once the loam has been spread to all areas, the sides of the new pavement will be hydroseeded.
- This past week a section of the cemetery fence has fallen over. A four-section set near the Appleton Street side was noticed to be down and it looks like it may have been caused by the recent high wind event, Hurricane Henri. No headstones were damaged, as the fence fell outward towards the street. Cassidy Forge has been contacted and will be out to inspect the fence and quote for some repairs.
- Broad Street Cemetery, Howard Street and the Friends Cemetery continue to have lawn maintenance operation provided on every other Monday schedule.
- During a recent windstorm event in Salem, a large branch from a beautiful pitch Pine was broken. The branch was attached to the tree and the foliage of the branch landed in between the headstones. No stones were damaged during this occurrence and since the branch has been removed, the tree will be monitored over the next several months to gauge the impact of the loss.
- The Right of Entry Form for the headstone restoration work in the Howard Street Cemetery has been signed and was sent to Epoch Preservation today. This work is scheduled for the month of September and should begin next week.
- The Charter Street Cemetery had the final walk through with the contractor, Landscape Architect, Mr. LeBlanc and the Preservation planner, Patti Kelleher on August 18th. The remaining items are to core aerate and do some overseeding in some of the disturbed areas.

- Martha Lyon and Mr. LeBlanc will meet with an arborist in the coming weeks to discuss the inventory of trees, as part of the Master Plan report and go over the scope of work.
- On July 17th at 11:30 p.m. there was a breach in the security at the Greenlawn Cemetery. A truck pulled into the front circle, near the office, backed up and stole a landscape trailer that was being stored there. The Cemetery Office is equipped with the Ring doorbell camera and caught the act in progress. The Salem Police are working on the case to determine if they can recover the trailer.
- The following week the staff pulled all trailered equipment to the maintenance garage area and chained them together. Since that a set of posts have been installed with a wire rope to secure the maintenance area at the end of each working day. Over the past weekend, Mr. LeBlanc instructed the staff to start closing the vehicle gates at the Orne Street entrance after dusk. Per Salem Code of Ordinances, Chapter 16, Sec. 16-5. - Hours cemeteries open to public, there will be no trespassing between Sunset and Sunrise. Mr. LeBlanc will be working with DPS to determine how to get the same coverage for the weekday nights.
- Signage has been put up around the Greenlawn Cemetery for the rules about dogs on leashes. New “no fishing” signs have also been installed around Sargent Pond.
- Regular maintenance is on-going with seasonal shrub pruning and grass cutting.

### **3. Charter St. Cemetery – Operation & Grounds update – Elizabeth Peterson**

Elizabeth Peterson was unable to attend but told Mr. LeBlanc that everything is adequate at this point and time and no need for changes. Ms. Peterson will keep the commission informed regarding the progress.

### **4. Greenlawn Dog/ Fishing/ Security Issues Discussions**

**Dog Discussion** – Signage has been put up around the Greenlawn Cemetery for the rules about dogs on leashes. Dog Officer Don Famico was on the call and said he goes by Howard and Broad Street Cemetery often and does not see a problem with dogs urinating on headstones or in the area. He will be putting more signs up about keeping dogs on a leash and cleaning up after them and will add a phone number for folks to report any violations. Ms. Donahue suggested raising the fine from \$50 to \$100. Mr. Famico and Mr. LeBlanc will work together to put up more signs.

Also on the call was Ward 6 Councilor Riccardi who brought up concerns from the constituents regarding sidewalks at Greenlawn for dog walkers, how to get more dog bags and how to get the awareness out to folks about taking care of your dogs. Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. LeBlanc expressed their concerns about dogs barking, off leash and urinating while funerals are going on. This is a special place/date where you go to bury your loved ones and it is a reflection on the city and on Greenlawn Cemetery. Councilor Riccardi is going to broaden the discussion with the neighborhood and see if they can come together and work out a mutual resolution.

Kelly Ryan, Cemetery Clerk was on the call and said she saw a dog defecate on a headstone, they are barking when funerals are going on and seems like there is never a solution. Ms. Ryan said we are trying to preserve and protect the cemetery.

Members of the public spoke and wrote in favor of continuing to allow dogs in the cemetery and some members of the public offered to monitor and report issues as they arise. The commission will monitor the situation and revisit.

**Fishing Discussion** – New “**NO FISHING**” signs have been installed around Sargent Pond.

**Operation and Grounds** – Mr. LeBlanc has been working on security with an electrician regarding wiring. The cemetery gates will be closed on weekends.

## **5. Request for funding for new Cemetery Truck- Vote**

Mr. LeBlanc explained to the commission that the pick-up/dump truck needs to be replaced. The cost to replace it is \$50,000, that includes a snowplow and sander/salter. He only needs \$15,000 from the Perpetual Care Fund. There is approximately \$22,000 now in the fund, that would leave approximately \$7,000. Funding for the cemetery equipment does not come from the city. Mr. LeBlanc will give the commission a plan with options.

Mr. O'Donnell made a motion to approve funding for a new truck for \$15,000 to come out of the Perpetual Care Fund. Ms. Ratliff seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

## **6. New Business**

- a.** Mr. LeBlanc wants the commission to review and clarify the rules and policies of the cemetery for interments regarding having to be a resident of Salem for five years.
- b.** Price increases for interments and add a standard clause for permission to open graves.

- c. The cemetery budget and trust funds need to be reviewed.
- 7. **Adjournment:** Ms. Donahue made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Ratliff. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey  
Commission Clerk

**Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25 and  
City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033**